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Statement by Neal Belitsky, General Manager -- Detroit Windsor Tunnel LLC

Michigan Border Development and Protection Authority Act
HB 4563

June 14, 2007

Michigan House Committee on New Economy and Quality of Life

The Michigan Border Development and Protection Authority Act (MBDPA) as introduced will give a public authority the responsibility of developing long-term policies related to the management and operations of all current and newly constructed Michigan border crossings, including the regulation of tolls, in addition to authority over the economic development surrounding each border.

The Detroit Windsor Tunnel is the second busiest passenger crossing between the United States and Canada and one of the more active commercial ports of entry. The Detroit Windsor Tunnel LLC, as the operator of the Tunnel, is not opposed to ways to improve the economic development around existing border crossings or support from the State for environmental and/or traffic studies. In fact, the Detroit Windsor Tunnel LLC supports more resources to improve the signage leading up to border crossings and a public service campaign to market and promote the region and promoting existing programs that make the border more efficient, such as NEXUS, FAST and other programs. And we support efforts by the state to continue to develop relationships with its Ontario counterparts in order to encourage cross-border travel and commerce. We will only benefit if Ontario and the State of Michigan work together in building a stronger region. In addition, we support greater advocacy by the State of Michigan to create a level playing field for all border crossings, in addition to efforts which brings more resources to the state for existing ports of entry.

However, the Detroit Windsor Tunnel cannot support any government act that creates more regulations, oversight and authority over individual border crossings, including the Detroit Windsor Tunnel, particularly when it affects the security of its customers. With six layers of government and their subdivisions, the border is already overly complex.

In fact, any regulation and oversight of an international border is a matter for the federal government. However, should the legislature create a border authority, then it should allocate seats to the border operators and to others knowledgeable about the border and how it operates.

We are committed to ensuring the safety and security of our customers and that commerce continues to flow into the state of Michigan. However, we cannot support any legislation that hinders us in this ability. As one of the busiest border crossings, we are determined to work collaboratively for the benefit of securing our nation, while facilitating the efficient flow of trade and travel across our region.

We would be more than happy to give you a personal briefing and tour at the Tunnel upon your next visit to Detroit. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me with any questions. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement.

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